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SACC Children Demonstrate Community Service Zeal

April 15, 2004 -- Children in the Fairfax County School Age Child Care (SACC) program will demonstrate their zeal for community service in two events planned for Monday, April 19, 2004.

At 1:00 p.m., children in the Orange Hunt Elementary (Springfield) SACC program will present pillows they have made for recovering heart surgery patients to representatives from the Northern Virginia Chapter of Mended Hearts who will visit their school.

At 2:00 p.m., children in the Crestview Elementary (Springfield) SACC program will travel by Connector bus to Inova Fairfax Hospital for Children to give the hospital 1,000 books collected by SACC centers for hospitalized children.

"We emphasize community service in our SACC centers throughout Fairfax County," says SACC Director Pat Diehl. "Our SACC teachers look for projects that actively involve children and show that everyone can make a difference in the community."

The 11" x 16" pillows were hand stitched and stuffed by the Orange Hunt SACC children. Mended Hearts, which provides services and counseling to heart patients, will give the pillows to patients after surgery. The patients place the pillows on their chests and press gently on them with their hands to lessen pain caused by coughing.

"The pillows are 95 percent child made," says Sulbha Garg, a teacher at Orange Hunt. Garg first saw the pillows as a hospital volunteer and learned more about them from a SACC parent who works as a cardiology nurse.

Crestview SACC coordinated the Inova book drive. Children in SACC centers throughout the county asked parents at each school to donate books for the program from a list of appropriate titles.

"Our kids sorted through thousands of books to make sure they were in good condition and had the right titles," says Crestwood Supervisor Steve Miller. Hospital staff will read the books to children who take the books home with them when they are discharged. Inova's books for children effort is part of the nationwide Reach Out and Read program.

SACC provides before and after school child care at 128 elementary schools throughout Fairfax County. In addition to the SACC program, the Office for Children, part of the Fairfax County Department of Family Services, helps County residents find child care, pay for child care, and start family child care businesses through programs such as Child Care Assistance and Referral, School Age Child Care, Head Start, the Home Child Care Permit, the USDA Child Care Food Program, and the Institute for Early Learning.